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AUTHOR Darity, Evangeline R.; Fredrickson, Ronald H.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the regional and sex differences of fear of success (FOS) imagery between black male and black female undergraduates attending two predominently black universities. The 258 respondents in this study were in general psychology and introductory sociology classes at one Northern and one Southern university. The fear of success construct is an inhibitory anxiety variable which is aroused in achievement oriented situations where success may imply loss of femininity and/or social consequences. Fear of success was defined by student responses to Pappo's Fear-of-Success, Self-Awareness Questionnaire and Horner's four FOS story leads modified with identity figures. A biographical data questionnaire was also used. The findings indicate that Southern females showed a higher level of FOS than Southern males. Northern males showed a higher level of FOS than did Northern females. Other differences and similarities are discussed. Implications for career counseling and research are presented. (Author/MK)

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A COMPARISON OF FEAR OF SUCCESS IMAGERY BETWEEN BLACK MALE AND BLACK FEMALE UNDERGRADUATES

EVANGELINE R. DARITY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Y. W.C.A.
HOLYOKE, MA. 01040

RONALD H. FREDRICKSON
PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS
AMHERST, MASSACHUSETTS 01002

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A COMPARISON OF FEAR OF SUCCESS IMAGERY BETWEEN

BLACK MALE AND BLACK FEMALE UNDERGRADUATES

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the regional and sex differences of fear-of-success (FOS) imagery between black male and black female undergraduates attending two predominantly black state universities. The 258 respondents in the study were in general psychology and introductory sociology classes at one Northern and one Southern state university.

The Fear-of-Success construct is an inhibitory anxiety variable which is aroused in achievement oriented situations where success may imply a loss of femininity and/or social consequences. Fear of success was defined in this study by student responses on an 83-item yes-no Fear-of-Success, Self-Awareness Questionnaire (Pappo, 1972) and Horner's (1972) four FOS story leads modified with identity figures. A brief questionnaire asking for biographical data was also used.

The findings of the study indicated that according to the Pappo scale, the North Carolina females showed a higher level of FOS than the North Carolina males.

There was a difference between the Ohio males and females on Horner's FOS Imagery with Ohio males showing higher FOS than the females. Other differences and similarities are discussed. Implications for career counseling and further research are presented.

A COMPARISON OF FEAR OF SUCCESS IMAGERY BETWEEN

BLACK MALE AND BLACK FEMALE UNDERGRADUATES

Achievement motivation of individuals of different gender and race is of concern to the counselor, psychologist and personnel worker. The study described here investigates the regional and sex difference in fear of success (FOS) imagery in black males and black females attending predominantly black state universities in two different regions of the United States.

The concept of fear of success was used by Matina Horner (1968) to explain differences in achievement between men and women. She said that the motive to succeed and the motive to avoid failure (Actkinson, 1974) do not predict performance as well for females as they do for males.

Horner suggested that high ability females are hampered in their academic efforts by the presence of an inhibitory anxiety variable--the fear of success-which is aroused in achievement-oriented situations where success may imply a loss of femininity and/or negative social consequences.

Horner (1968) reported a significant difference between the male and female students in the kind of responses made to projective leads. The women wrote more responses to the story leads revealing negative social consequences of high professional and academic achievement than did the males. Only 8 out of 88 or less than 10 percent of the men compared to 56 of the 90 or better than 62 percent of the women in the study expressed FOS imagery according to Horner's assessment.

Considering the prevailing sex roles and the emphasis on education as a means to "get ahead" in a competitive society, Horner speculated that the developmental trend toward greater FOS in older college females was due to the increasingly significant competition for valued positions in academic and

professional life. Consistent with this is her finding (Horner, 1972) that academically superior female students, those most capable of competing with males for professional positions, are more likely than their less able classmates to show FOS.

Using Horner's leads, Moore (1972) found that forty-three or 67 percent of sixty-four college females demonstrated FOS. Moore's (1972) study suggests the possible effects of sex-role indentification. This is to say that the presence or absence of FOS appears to be a function of the degree to which a woman identifies with the traditional larger socio-cultural norms for the behavior and attitudes of the female sex group. While caution must be used in speculations upon the validity of these interpretations, Horner's (1968) original work has prompted additional studies which have produced interesting and sometimes inconsistent findings.

Tangri (1969) found that senior level college women wrote more fear of success stories than did junior college women. Two other studies (Kresojevich, 1972; Zuckerman and Allison, 1973), failed to relate fear of success to year of college among both males and females. FOS was found in at least one story of virtually every subject (Kresojevich, 1972). High grade point average women were found to have a higher level of FOS than low GPA women, sophomores were significantly more optimistic about success than seniors. FOS scores of sophomores and seniors did not differ appreciably (Kresojevich, 1972).

Robbins and Robbins' (1973) results differed in several respects from Horner's (1968) original study. The female students at Rutgers seemed more confident of the future of the young woman in the story leads than their Michigan counterparts. Rutgers data showed no difference between the sexes insofar as FOS was concerned.

The findings in the Levine and Crumrine (1975) study do not support Horner's (1968) conclusion that women display FOS imagery when asked to write stories about successful women. In most instances in Levine and Crumrine (1975) study, there were no significant differences between male and female respondents with regard to negative imagery.

It has been suggested that Horner's (1968) Anne lead may reflect cultural stereotypes about women's achievement rather than respondents' anxiety about success (Zuckerman and Wheeler, 1975).

Investigations into fear of success between black male and female undergraduates are few. Weston and Mednick (1970) found that black undergraduate college women exhibit less FOS than white college women and social class had no relationship to fear of success. Puryear and Mednick (1974) found fear of success imagery to be more characteristic of black women expressing militant attitudes particularly among those women reporting a poor relationship with a male. What Puryear and Mednick (1974) found indicated that achievement in intellectually competitive situations is more likely to be associated with the anticipation of negative consequences for black college women who are militant than those who are not.

Horner (1968) has suggested that the high FOS found in white students is probably due to the aggressive overtones of intellectual competition needed for success in these areas since aggression has been socially linked to a lack of femininity, and its display is seen as leading to negative consequences. The finding of Weston and Mednick (1970) suggest that success in intellectual and competitive situations does not elicit similar fear in the black college women.

Tresemer (1977) has noted the lack of consistant empirical research in supporting the fear of success explanation. It is suspected that the college,

sex, intelligence, and social milieux in which one lives will relate to ones motivation to achieve. However, before counselors and psychologists can draw inferences from these findings, more research is needed on the assessment of FOS, regional, sex, and racial differences on responses by different populations. The study described here proposes to speak to some of these issues.

There were three major hypotheses tested.

1. There would be no sex or regional difference between black college females in "fear of success" as measured by responses on Pappo's FOS/Self-Awareness Questionnaire nor on Horner's modified story leads.

2. There would be no sex or regional difference in "fear of success" responses between the Ohio students and the North Carolina students on Pappo's Questionnaire nor Horner's modified story leads.

3. There would be no relationship among fear of success measures and biographical responses of career goals, parental career level, and grade point average.

Methodology

Subjects

A total of 258 black undergraduate respondents enrolled in introductory psychology and sociology classes participated in this study.

Sixty-seven males and 61 females were attending a state university in Ohio and 61 males and 67 females were students in a state university in North Carolina. The student enrollment was predominantly black at both universities. The mean age for the total study population was 20.8 years. All students were recruited on the basis of their instructors willingness to have the two instruments completed during the 60 minute class period.

The respondents were administered the questionnaire booklet by the first author in a large classroom or auditorium with about an equal number of men and women present. Four days were spent at each school collecting data. The questionnaire booklet contained an 83-item yes-no fear of success/self-awareness questionnaire (Pappo, 1972), four fear of success story leads with a photograph of an identity figure, plus a brief questionnaire asking for biographical data. The questionnaire booklet was field-tested for clarity and completeness on a college population and revised for final duplication.

In the initial recruitment, the professors were asked not to reveal the purpose of the study to the students. An opportunity was provided for a discussion of the study after all testing was completed at that particular university.

Instruments

The Pappo (1972) 83-item, yes-no questionnaire asked about the student's personal feelings, attitudes, and experiences with regard to a large range of situations. This instrument was designed to yield a single score. High scores (greater than 44) according to Pappo (1972) were presumed to identify individuals high in FOS/low in self-awareness. Individuals with low scores (less than 44) were identified low in FOS/high in self-awareness.

The second part of the questionnaire booklet measured FOS through four Horner modified verbal leads presented with a black male and female photographic figure with whom the respondents could identify. For the 258 males and females in this study the following verbal leads were used to elicit fear of success responses. Two of the story leads are taken from Horner's (1968) instrument and two from Fleming's modification (1974) of Horner's earlier instrument.

1. After first term finals, Gwen finds herself at the top of her law class.

2. After first term finals, Bob finds himself at the top of his law class.
3. Kim is sitting in a chair with a smile on her face.
4. Tim is sitting in a chair with a smile on his face.

Instructions for the four leads state, "Your task for lead #1, #2, #3, and #4 is to write a story that is suggested to you by each lead. Try to imagine what is going on in each lead. Then write a "story" answering the following questions:

1. What is happening? Who are the person(s)?
2. What has led up to this situation? That is, what has happened in the past?
3. What is being thought? What is wanted? By whom?
4. What will happen? What will be done?

In other words, write as complete a story as you can--a story with a plot and character(s).

Construct validity on either scale has not been fully established. Results of this study will aid in this effort. Both FOS measures were used in order to make comparisons between responses and correlate findings across respondents.

Scoring System

Two female graduate students, one male undergraduate, and one male high school English teacher were trained to score the Horner and Fleming story leads according to a revised scoring system developed by Horner and Fleming (1977).

Before the first training session, the raters were given a scoring manual to read (Horner and Fleming, 1977). Six training sessions varying in length

from two to four hours were conducted. Sixteen hours of rater training were held with the four raters. Twenty-three sets of responses collected during the pilot test were used in the training. After an inter-rater reliability co-efficient of .85 had been reached consistently, the raters were randomly assigned to rate subject responses to the four story leads.

Each story was scored on the following six categories (numbers in parentheses refer to scoring weights).

a. "contingent negative consequences" (+2) is scored when negative consequences are caused by the person;

   Example: "Bob is wondering if his cheating was really worth his success. Later, Bob will end up in jail for being a crooked lawyer."

b. "non-contingent negative consequences" (+2) is scored when negative consequences are caused by external factors;

   Example: "Kim goes to English class and reminisces over the joke and begins to chuckle. This diverts her attention from her lesson in English and the teacher asked her to leave for not paying attention."

c. "interpersonal engagement" (+2) is scored when two or more persons are involved with each other;

   Example: "Kim is sitting two seats away from Tim. Kim has had her eye on Tim for a long time. She would like to get to know Tim better."

d. "relief" (+1) is scored when tension or deprivation is suddenly alleviated, often in a manner incurring surprise. There must be movement in the story.

   Example: "Tim had a rough time getting to the position he's in today. Right now he is daydreaming about his boyhood. Today it's a whole new ball game for him."

e. "absence of instrumental activity" (+1) is scored when there is no activity toward attaining a goal;

Example: "Kim is so happy because Ms. Jackson, her sociology teacher, did not come to class today. She did not have to take the test."

f. "absence of others" (-2) is scored when there is no mention of another person or group of persons in the story besides the character in the story lead;

Example: "Kim is sitting in a chair smiling. She had just won first prize at tennis. At first Kim had lost many matches but now Kim is playing well because of the daily practice.

Results

The major part of this investigation was concerned with testing sex and regional differences (Ohio and North Carolina) on fear of success measures.

For Ohio males the Pappo mean score was 40.7 (SD 10.0), for females the mean was 39.8 (SD 9.9). A t-test carried out to compare the mean scores for male and females revealed that there were no significant differences between Ohio males and females. There were similar findings in North Carolina on the Pappo FOS Questionnaire where the male mean was 42.7 (SD 9.2) and 43.4 (SD 11.1) mean for females. There were no significant differences between males and females.

In comparing all females with all males in the study on Pappo's scale, 43 percent of the females showed high FOS/low Self-Awareness. A chi-square test carried out to compare these percentages indicated no significant differences between males and females.

Analysis of the Pappo's FOS scale revealed only one significant difference, that was between North Carolina females and males with females

showing a significant higher level of FOS/low self-awareness than the North Carolina males. This group showed the highest FOS/low Self-Awareness of any group of the entire sample.

The second dependent variable (Horner's modified story leads) attempting to measure fear of success was the FOS Imagery score created by averaging the ratings of student responses to four sets of story leads. Two raters were used. High scores indicate low FOS and low scores indicate high FOS. This was done because both "Law" and "Smile" leads were considered part of a total fear of success imagery score.

In comparing all respondents by sex on FOS Imagery, the mean score for males was .70 and the mean score for females was .24. These findings are reported in Table 1.

See Table 1

There were no significant differences between all males and all females on FOS Imagery either female to male or female leads and similarly with males.

In order to determine if there were regional sex differences on Horner's FOS Imagery Leads, comparisons were made between the males and females in the Ohio region and the North Carolina region. In the Ohio region the mean score for the males was -.83 and for the females the mean score was .96. There were significant differences at the .05 level between the Ohio males and females on Horner's FOS Imagery.

In comparing the North Carolina males and females on FOS Imagery, the mean score for the males was -.55 and the mean score for the females was -.42. There were no significant differences between the North Carolina region males and females on Horner's FOS Imagery contrary to results on Pappo's scale.

TABLE 1

An Overview of Comparisons of Findings by Sex on
Horner's FOS Imagery and Pappo's High/Low Fear-of-Success

		HORNER				PAPPO		
AREA	Sex	Imagery Mean Scale	t-test value	Probability	Sex	High/Low FOS Percentage Distribution	Chi Square	Probability
OHIO	M	-.83	2.42	.02*	M	High 38% Low 62%	0.000	N.S.
	F	.96			F	High 37% Low 63%		
NORTH CAROLINA	M	-.55	.18	.86 N.S.	M	High 26% Low 74%	6.20	.025*
	F	-.42			F	High 49% Low 51%		
OHIO AND NORTH CAROLINA	M	.70	-1.81	.07 N.S.	M	High 33% Low 67%	2.78	N.S.
	F	.24			F	High 43% Low 57%		

* $p < .05$

There were no statistically significant differences in responses to Horner-Fleming's FOS Imagery on the total sample by sex. In comparing by region, there were no significant differences between the North Carolina region males and females, only in the Ohio region was there a significant difference and then in the unpredicted way with males showing greater fear of success as measured by the combined leads.

Pearson product-moment coefficients were calculated to determine whether there was a significant correlation between Pappo's scale, and Horner's FOS Imagery, Career Goals, Mother's Occupation, Father's Occupation and Grade Point Average. These variables, as a whole, showed no statistically significant correlations. Table 2 shows these findings.

See Table 2 and 3

The field of greatest concentration of undergraduate majors fell in the social category. Despite several years of concern about our national dependence upon science and technology, the numbers of respondents in this study electing majors in science and mathematics was actually small.

See Table 4

Discussion

The counselor, psychologist or researcher, looking for clear indications that the construct "fear of success" is viable in explaining sex difference in achievement motivation measures will be disappointed in the findings reported here. There may be a number of explanations for this which are beyond the customary limitations of behavioral science research. (1) Pappo's scale and the modified Horner's cues may not be sensitive to the subtle pressures felt

TABLE 2

Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Ohio Males and Females
On Pappo's Self-Awareness, Horner's FOS Cues, GPA, Career Goal,
Father's Occupation and Mother's Occupation

	SELF-AWARENESS	FOS IMAGERY STORY	GPA	CAREER	FAOCCUP	MAOCCUP
SELF-AWARENESS	1.0000 (p=.001)	0.0613 (p=.255)	.1084 (p=.121)	-.1537 (p=.048)*	.1372 (p=.069)	.1221 (p=.094)
STORY FOS IMAGERY		1.0000 (p=.001)	.0523 (p=.287)	.1021 (p=.36)	-.0908 (p=.164)	-.2042 (p=.013)*
GPA			1.0000 (p=.001)	.0228 (p=.403)	-.0289 (p=.378)	.1141 (p=.109)
CAREER				1.0000 (p=.001)	.0286 (p=.379)	-.1096 (p=.119)
FAOCCUP					1.0000 (p=.001)	2363 (p=.005)
MAOCCUP						1.0000 (p=.001)

* p< .05

TABLE 3

Pearson Correlation Coefficients for North Carolina Males and Females on Pappo's Self-Awareness, Horner's FOS Cues, GPA, Career Goal, Father's Occupation and Mother's Occupation

	SELF-AWARENESS	FOS IMAGERY STORY	GPA	CAREER	FAOCCUP	MAOCCUP
SELF-AWARENESS	1.0000 (p=.01)	.0527 (p=.283)	.1462 (p=.055)	-.0730 (p=.213)	-.0386 (p=.337)	.0512 (p=.289)
STORY FOS IMAGERY		1.0000 (p=.001)	.1058 (p=.124)	.0534 (p=.280)	-.0253 (p=.381)	.0550 (p=.274)
GPA			1.0000 (p=.001)	.0659 (p=.236)	.1469 (p=.054)	.0960 (p=.148)
CAREER				1.0000 (p=.001)	.0308 (p=.369)	.0730 (p=.213)
FAOCCUP					1.0000 (p=.001)	.2802* (p=.001)
MAOCCUP						1.0000 (p=.001)

* p< .05

TABLE 4

UNDERGRADUATE MAJORS MALES AND FEMALES
IN OHIO AND NORTH CAROLINA

Major	Ohio**	North Carolina***	Total
Literature History Arts	7 (5.8%)	3 (2.4%)	10 (4.1%)
Social Science	40 (33%)	53 (42.7%)	93 (38%)
Natural Science and Mathematics	13* (10.7%)	4 (3.2%)	17 (6.9%)
Business Education	18 (14.9%)	18 (14.5%)	36 (14.7%)
Physical Education	10 (8.3%)	7 (5.6%)	17 (6.9%)
Education	17 (14%)	39 (31.5%)	56 (22.9%)
Undecided	16 (13.2%)	--	16 (6.5%)
Total	121 (100%)	124 (100%)	245 (100%)

* Includes 3 Medical Technology
** 8 non-responses
*** 5 non-responses

by black females in our society for limiting ambitions. Or perhaps the modifications to Horner's cues changed the responses given. (2) Because attitudes and norms in the last few years have stressed equal opportunity and treatment, the population used in this study may be more aware of the "correct" response and answered accordingly. Assuming the instruments valid, perhaps women do not fear a loss of their femininity because of high academic and professional ambitions. (3) Much work needs to be done to improve the reliability and validity of the instruments. Even though careful procedures were followed in checking on rater drift and inter-rater reliability, the standard deviations were such as to suggest limited ability to discriminate. The standard deviations on the Pappo's Self-Awareness Questionnaire ranged from 9.15 for males in North Carolina to 10.04 for males in Ohio. On Horner's modified FOS cues the standard deviation varied from 4.51 for males in North Carolina to 3.71 for females in North Carolina.

There are a number of areas which need further investigation. (1) Why did black males in Ohio show greater FOS than did their female counterparts? Stories written by Ohio males suggested less a fear of success as defined in this study but more the perception that success of a black man will not go unchallenged by the prevailing power structure.

> "He will probably not become the leading black lawyer. It will be too hard to push open those closed doors."
>
> "Tim had a top job offer. He must fight through the loop holes that has made the white man richer and the poor man poorer."

The high FOS responses of North Carolina females may suggest some regional differences. However, because the Pappo scale differences were not corroborated by Horner's modified cues, further study is needed before conclusions can be offered.

The correlational work including personal data may be the most useful for career counselors and personnel in high education. Some of the major points are summarized as follows:

(1) The higher the GPA (Grade Point Average) the higher the recorded FOS. Although the findings were not significant, they do support Horner's original finding in 1968.

(2) Aspirations of 79 percent of the combined population included the top three occupational levels of professional, managerial, and semi-professional managerial.

(3) There are differences between male and females in careers sought for spouses. Sex role identification appears to be a strong factor which needs to be considered in life career planning. Career counseling for a prospective husband and wife as a team may be useful practice on college campuses.

(4) Attainment of a career goal and satisfaction was ranked high by students in both regions.

(5) A disproportionate number of the population were majors in the social and behavioral sciences (38%). Even recognizing that the data were collected in introductory psychology and sociology classes taken by most students, the percentage is high and suggests the need to counsel and provide information on the value of majors in the physical and natural sciences.

(6) Women with responses which indicated higher fear of success tended to aspire to lower level of occupations. The reverse appeared true for males especially in Ohio. The lower assessment of one's own ability to compete rather than fear of success may describe these measured differences. A career counseling program which includes a positive but realistic assessment of one's own ability may avoid a preoccupation of failure in finding a mate and assist in achieving full academic potential.

More questions were raised than answered by this study. However, the findings reported here along with other studies completed by Robbins and Robbins (1973), Levine and Crumrine (1975), Zuckerman and Wheeler (1975), and Weston and Mednick (1970), raise questions about the use of the fear of success construct as an inhibitory anxiety variable which can be applied to racially varied college student populations.

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